



CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

February 9, 2009

Senator Toni Harp, Co-Chair Appropriations Committee
Representative John Geragosian, Co-Chair Appropriations Committee
Representative Thomas Reynolds, Chair Regulations & Protection Subcommittee, Appropriations Committee

My name is Ted Schroll, Legislative Representative for the Connecticut State Firefighters Association. Our Association represents approximately 28,000 career and volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. Our Association wishes to comment on Governor Rell's budget proposals for the

COMMISSION ON FIRE PREVENTION & CONTROL

We are very concerned with the Governors proposal to suspend the funding for Firefighter 1 Training in the amount of \$555,250 for the next biennium. As stated in the budget documents, "*Funding was provided in FY2008 by the legislature to reimburse municipalities and municipal fire companies for one half the cost of Firefighter 1 certification and recruit training.*" This was a program that had been proposed for 10+ years. It was felt that this was a good way to insure that some small town fire departments would not be restricted from available & required training because of financial considerations. It was also felt that this would be a form of financial relief for municipalities.

The original budget proposal for firefighter training for the FY ending 6/09 was supposed to be \$795,000, but 2009 budget rescissions lowered that amount down to \$555,250. A request for this item for FY 2009-2010 & FY 2010-2011 was placed at \$595,000. This item has been "suspended" down to \$0 for both fiscal years. This is a very critical concern for the training of firefighters in the State of Connecticut.

Now that this program has been in effect for the past two (2) years, many fire departments/municipalities are relying on this funding to train their firefighters. Currently it costs approximately \$450-\$500 for the Firefighter 1 course for volunteer firefighters, and just over \$5000 for Recruit training for career firefighters. (The disparity in cost is because career firefighters usually attend and live dormitory style at the Fire Academy in Windsor Locks.) State reimbursement is one half of that amount.

We are very concerned of the repercussions of this budget cut. This ill advised action could shut down firefighter training in Connecticut for the next 2 years. In some cases, municipalities may put off hiring of needed firefighters because of the expense of training those individuals. In the case of volunteer firefighters, some must pay for their own training because of municipal budget constraints. It should not cost them out of pocket expenses to volunteer their time to this important public safety service that municipalities are obligated to provide for their residents. Be aware that OSHA & NFPA require this training.

As I'm sure all legislators are aware, unlike the STATE POLICE, there is no STATE FIRE DEPARTMENT. Fire and Rescue services state-wide are performed by municipal fire departments, even on State property. We feel that the State has an obligation to, at least, partially fund firefighter training for all firefighters.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We would urge your reinstating this critical funding.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ted Schroll, Legislative Representative
Connecticut State Firefighters Association